DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 169 188 UD 019 291

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TITLE Inner City Model Adolescent School. A Research Model.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 16p.; Not available in hard copy due to typographical factors

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescence; *Adolescents; Educational Improvement; *Educationally Disadvantaged; *Futures (of Society); Psychological Characteristics; Relevance (Education); Secondary Education; Socioeconomic Influences; *Student Needs; *Urban Education; Urban Environment

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the problems and needs of inner-city youth and suggests a model educational institution for adolescents residing in urban centers during future decades. Specific problems and needs referred to include biological, psychological, environmental, and socioeconomic, particulary those problems faced by the black adolescent. It is proposed that a model school for inner-city youth should take these problems and needs into consideration. In addition, it is argued that the secondary school should be at the apex of the city community and that all of its industrial and commercial means of production should be directly responsible for the viability and economic survival of all secondary institutions. The model presented is based on the contention that there is a need to drastically alter the cultural, social and economic environmental framework in which city secondary schools currently operate. An enumeration and discussion of the model school's underlying philosophy is followed by a description of the proposed curriculum and administrative policy. (Author/EB)

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INNER CITY MODEL ADOLESCENT SCHOOL

A research model

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INTRODUCTION

The crisis that besets urban American today has been unfolding for the better part of two decades. Descriptions of this pathological phenomenon run rapid through the pages of sociological case studies, political monologues, and federal government commission reports. Big city America has been characterized as blite-wridden, sprawling metropolises; with dwindling tax basis, unmanageable bureauracies; and ineffective school systems. The ominous conditions of urban living are so well known, there is no need to reiterate them in this writing. Although unemployment, housing, and transportation are considered the most significant problem confronting urban American cities, education remains the singal most significant area of concern for the managers of our sprawling metropolises. Despite the fact that the number of high school graduates have increased considerably over the last two decades, administrators of inner-city schools are continuing to be overwhelmed by factors that inhibit the success of a large portion of secondary schools students. It is the intent of this paper to examine the problems and needs of inner-city youth; and to suggest a model educational institution for adolescence youth residing in urban centers during future decades. The model school grounded on the theory that the quality of life experienced by the inhabitants of any city is inextriplicably linked to the kind and quality of its educational institutions. This paper will argue that the secondary school ought to be at the apex of the city community and that all of its industrial and commercial means of productions should be directly responsible for the viability and economic survival of all secondary institutions. The most significant aspect of the model is that calls for the creation of new

schools within new cities established as a result of federal land grants. It is the contention of this paper that the federal government and the American business man ought to join in a partnership to stimulate economic growth by creating new cities with land grants to the inner-city poor whoo currently contribute very little to the American economy. The role of the government would be to invest in secondary schools in these new cities while providing land grants to the currently disenfranchized, as a means for assisting them in establishing new found cities. The primary focus of this paper will be to describe such a model school and how it would operate within these new cities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ten years ago outraged and powerless parents joined forces with enlightened educators and community leaders to wage an assault on the power structure governing inner-city schools across our nation. During this brief period known as the community control movement, poor and uneducated black parents sat on local school borads, disenchanted black educators left the system to establish what was then referred to as alternative schools and an air of optimism resounded throughout the black community. The term "community control" has little meaning in 1978 and although the number of black students completing high school has significantly increased, the problems confronting the educators of inner-city youth have grown more severe over time. The model school for inner-city youth presented here is based on the contention that the current structure of public secondary schools is incapable of providing meaningful educational experiences for a large number of black inner-city youth. Among the most troublesome periods in human educational development is that time in our lives known as adolescence. It is that period of existence where most individuals make the physical and emotional transition from childhood into young adulthood. For many urbanized youth it ushers in an era of frustration, misunderstanding and restlessness. Adolescence is characterized by the rapid growth of functional body needs and in equally rapid decline in the tolerance level for doctronaire instruction. In highly populated metropolitan centers where teachers and administrators encounter enormous difficulties in creating a meaningful school program, generations of our youth are permanently and temporarily distracted by the natural lure of unknown

challenges to their maturity. Drugs, alcohol, guns, and other such assumed maturation indicators often provide greater satisfaction for adolescent needs than do our schools. In many instances the school becomes an exercise in boredom, falling to meet the transitional needs of its clients.

Problems of adolescent transition occur in all youth and are influenced by biological, environmental and socio economic factors. It is contended here that a model school for inner-city youth ought to take these aforementioned factors into consideration. The alternative free school movement of a decade ago, the intermediate and middle school move currently afoot in many systems today, the Pioneering Park Way School of Philadelphia and the Antioch School without walls experiments, the open classroom concept. All have been efforts to deal with the ever growing realization that the adolescent deserves a unique kind of education. Before describing the model adolescent school, it is necessary to further define the term adolescent, to discuss the problems that they are confronted with regarding their identity, ego, and conflict, to briefly recount their primary needs of adolescence with respect to the model school and to describe the environment in which the adolescent thrives.

ADOLESCENCE - ITS DEFINITION

Unlike childhood and adulthood, which are prolonged periods of existence; adolescence has been typified by its transitional nature. In many cultures, adolescence is completely diminished to a select number of days. In western society its lifetime has been

ambigiously defined to begin as early as age ten and end as late as age twenty one (Erickson).

In the most sweeping kind of general definition, adolescence can be characterized by the near simultaneous arrival of puberty, self identification and the emergence of ego. (Friedenberg)

IDENTITY - EGO - CONFLICT

Modern western society has been described as being overwhelmed with an array of stresses and strains that are considered normal. Individual behavior is measured by the extent to which people are capable of negotiating the stress that results from the normal amounts of tension and anxiety of life. Reserachers argue that adolescents face a multiplicity of stressed and strains because of the confusion incurred in defining their status. The identity crisis phenomena (described by Erickson) for adolescents is not universal in its implications. Studies of youth in non-western cultures have shown us that adolescents are not always preoccupied with their emotional instability. In such societies where role-definitions have traditional roots, adolescent schooling is not considered problematic.

The ability to conjure up imaginary circumstances, to perceive concepts of faith, religion, intelligence, intimacy and love, are by-products of adolescence. It is only at adolescence that the individual learns to distinguish between himself and others. This self-consciousness which is so characteristic of early adolescence has been defined as ego manifestation. Western educators such as Piaget, Elkind and Gatteno argue that the young adolescent, because of the physiological metamorphosis he is undergoing, is primarily concerned with himself. This

belief that others are preoccupied with his appearance and behavior constitutes the egocentrism of the adolescent. Assertion is a common characteristic behaviorial trait of adolescents. It is contended that neither the family nor the schools do an adequate job in preparing the adolescent to first recognize control, and then assert his or her ego. When students, namely adolescents fail to understand and control the growth and assertion of their own ego, conflict erupts. The youthful ego refuses to be coopted by the experience of age and equally relunctance to be outer directed.

The urban life style is to a great extent a survival and adaptation process. Black youth enter into adolescent much earlier than normally expected, and their period of soujourn is often shortened by the harsh realities of big city life. The urban family structure is often unduly maligned by social and economic factors to such a degree that black adolescent are forced into the same conflict of interest relationship with their family. The competitive spirit becomes constrived and controlled by the aquisition of material possessions in big city America. When urban youth enter the schoolhouse, they bring with them egos that require an enormous amount of nurturing. The school and the urban environment appear as adversaries in competition for an audience with the adolescent's ego.

ADOLESCENT NEEDS:

The model school should be centered around the needs of inner-city adolescents. The following is a summary of those needs:

1. The model adolescent school should provide the opportunity for the uninterrupted resolution of the identity crisis.

2. The school should be prepared to moniter the pre and post puberty cycle within each individual as a mechanism for self awareness - enabling control.

3. The creation of learning experiences that nuture the developmental growth of the ego is a prime responsibility of the school.

4. The school should expose the adolescent to situational experiences that permit the students to indulge in the creation of values in congruence with the total social-cultural set.

5. The school should be cognizant of the effects of the physical maturation process on the cognitive and affective learning styles of adolescent youth.

6. The school should become the catalysis in the reconstruction of the interrelationship between family and youth.

7. The school must recognize the need in youth to become empowered with the social-cultural tools necessary for the transformation of the present value system.

OPERATIONALIZING THE MODEL:

The model presented herein is based on the contention that there is a need to drastically after the cultural, social and economic environmental framework in which city secondary schools currently operate. An enumeration and discussion of the schools underlying philosophy will be followed by a description of the proposed curriculum and administrative policy.

It is proposed that:

1. Private industry in conjunction with the federal government established new cities in heretofore sparcely inhabited regions of the

The United States centered around secondary schools.

2. Profits from primary and secondary industrial schools be utilized as the economic base for these secondary schools, thus eliminating the need for a property tax base.

3. The schools should be multi-based, with students traveling from the inner-city to the new and then to an isolated region near the new city (National Park, Agricultural Region).

4. Schools utilize cyclical mobility as the principal instructional vehicle with students moving from one site to another during designated periods of time.

5. Schools utilize a new set of socio-economic principles in their efforts to create new life styles for the new cities. Seven basic principles are suggested:

A. Self Determination - Provide students with the will and the skills to profit from their own labor, make decisions on self reliance, and to hypothesize about further self projections.

B. Cooperative Economics - Provide students with opportunities to develop their sense of family and community as it relates to survival. To practice the principle of the profit motive for the collective good.

C. Faith - To provide array of spiritual (religious-doctrinaire-non-verbal, non-written) experiences for students in order to strengthen the individual's need and belief in collective as well as individual efforts.

D. Unity - The school curriculum should stress the oneness in all things. It should provide the opportunity for students to experience growth through commonality.

E. Collective work and responsibility - the school curriculum should

place importance on the collective effort when carrying out physical and mental tasks. Students should be encouraged to view responsibility as a group act in concert with individual responsibility.

F. Identity - The school curriculum should permit the full discovery of the self for each student.

G. Purpose - In order to assist the students in gaining clarity as to what, where, and why, the school curriculum should provide practical experiences in value formation for students.

6. Model adolescent schools should be experientially based with the students soujourn in the school determined by his or her ability to complete contracted life skills experiences.

7. The model adolescent curriculum should focus primarily on providing students with the opportunity to become self-reliant with the framework of communal values.

OPERATIONALIZING THE CURRICULUM:

Within the context of the modern educational environment, there exist a constant conflict between those curriculum concerns that are provincial or local in nature, and those values and curriculum concerns that are worldly or universal in their implications. Because of the oppressive conditions of urban life, black inner-city youth exhibit an even greater propensity to be affected by provincial-universal conflicts within the curriculum. Examples of physical mobility along with communal self reliance within educational institutions are more common in to people of the third world than it is to western societies. In Cuba, when a youth reaches adolescence, he or she is sent into the countryside to obtain a more practical task oriented education. In many traditional

African societies, such as with the Zulu in the northern transval of South Africa, young men spend their middle years away from their immediate homes, in service to tribal chiefs some distance away. In addition, the teachings of the Sufi and other Orthodix Muslims point out that the most suitable education for youth are experiences that involve travel, the study of agricultural pursuits, the art of ocean navigation and the study of heavenly bodies.

MODEL ADOLESCENT SCHOOL COURSE OFFERINGS:

I. *Communication Skills*

1. *Writing for publication - the creation of a magazine, newspaper or book.*

2. *Speaking for public consumption - an organized speaking tour outside the school environment.*

3. *Foreign languages - to empower the adolescent with the skill of multiple tongues.*

   a. *Spanish*
   b. *Swahilli*
   c. *Arabic*
   d. *French*
   e. *Chinese*

4. *Still and moving photography - the creation of a photographic essay or film on a contemporary problem.*

II. *Functional - Social Studies Knowledge*

1. *The history of soul folks in America (African - Mexican (Chicano) - Asian Spanish speaking).*

2. *The politics of city government - visits to the city's municipal offices.*

3. *The anthropological history of man - a museum study.*

4. *World geography - who lives on what land?*

5. *Gods and Religions - did man make God in his own image? By what color and name we find him? Life after death? Who were the prophets?*

6. *Psychological crutches, or the Jones got me down - the sociological and physical affects of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, coffee, etc.*

7. *Money - rich men and poor men, land and property, taxes and budgets.*

8. *Changes - isms, wars, flags, revolutions, evolutions, court cases, rebellions, constitutions, prisons, and political outcasts.*

9. *Astronomy science - zodiac, astrology, occult, myths.*

III. *Hard Physical - Cultural Skills*

1. *Big sport - intramural athletic communal competition.*

2. *High sport - individual athletic achievement.*

3. *Self - defense training (Karate - Judo - Do Jo).*

4. *Sex and the body - sexual changes and development - care of the body, eating, sleeping, drinking.*

5. *Recreative artistic skills sketching, painting, drafting.*

6. *Music - choral singing, marching band.*

7. *Dance - modern dance troupe.*

8. *Drama - theatrical production of ethnic conditions (History).*

V. *Technical - Mechanical - Survival Skills*

1. *The culinary arts - the complete preparation of a daily meal menu for a designated period of time and a specific number of people. (Operating the communal - family eating room).*

2. *The making of a suit of clothes. (Emphasis will be placed on tradition garb of Africa and Asia, and not the clothing of western man).*

3. *Mastering the operation of selected mechanical devices. (Automobile operation and repair of selected parts, typewriter, adding machine, etc.).*

4. *The building of a livable shelter (House).*

5. *A protracted stay in a secluded region (National Park).*

6. *A journey on a ship to a place of some distance.*

7. *A journey on a train to a place of some distance.*

Administration

The model school will avoid the traditional administrator - professional teacher - parent - student separation of responsibilities by contracting parents into the total operation of the school. Parents will serve on a parent council on a rotating basis with duties and compensation comparative to all others involved in the educative process. Since it is suggested that these new schools should emerge in new environments, parents will be integral parts of the out migration settlement. Membership on the parent council is not limited to biological parents. As a consequence of the school's life skills building mission, parents will submit to re-education designed to assist them build their communities.

The decision making process in the model adolescent will be based on a cooperative model as outlined in diagram #1.

FUTURE FOCUS:

A number of non-traditional ideas concerning the salvation of secondary education have been introduced in this work. Much of what has been discussed in this paper deserves further explication. The basic tenants of the argument are grounded in the belief that certain western values such as: "property taxes in support of public schools", and "the profit motive for the private good"; no longer support the needs and aspirations of inner-city populations and the youth that inhabit its secondary schools.

It is contended that out migration is both a traditional characteristic of African people, as well as; acting as a stimulus for economic growth in America. Within the last decade African Americans have been manipulated into forsaking valuable inner-city land for the suburban fringes. These urban renewal schemes do not create self reliance within the African American community, but only foster a greater sense of dependency. It is argued here that African Americans should begin to resettle whole populations of folk on virgin islands with commerce and industry supporting the educational system. Because it is our energetic adolescents who are currently suffering most from the ill affects of inner-city life, and because these adults have traditionally possessed the most vitality; it is suggested that adolescent schools act as the vanguard in these resettlement efforts. Finally, it is alleged that these resettlement efforts be based on principles of communal self-reliance. In his essay "Education for Self-Reliance" Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania relates the application of these principles to education. "Our educational system has to foster the social goods of living together, and working together, for the common good. It has to prepare our young people to play a dynamic and constructive part in the development of a society in which all members share fairly in the good or bad fortune of the group, and in which progress is measured in terms of human well-being, not prestige, building cars, or other such things, whether privately or publicly owned. Our education must therefore inculcate a sense of commitment of the total community.... this means that the educational system of Tanzania must emphasize cooperative, endeavor, not individual advancement." If education is to have significant meaning for Black youth inhibiting our inner-city in future, decades institutions will have to adopt philosophies that equally emphasize cooperative endeavor, not individual advancement.

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